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A/N

I wanna take a moment to send a HUGE EFFING SHOUTOUT TO The_Warrior_Writer bc they are AMAZING AF. THEY ARE THE MOST DEDICATED AND SUPPORTIVE AND AMAZING FOLLOWER EVER. LITERALLY COMMENTING AND VOTING ON EVERY. SINGLE. CHAPTER. AHHHHH MAKES MY HEART SO FLUTTERYYYYYYY :3 <3

Allegiences

DewClan
•~•~•~•~•~•~•~•~•~•~•~•~•~•~•~•~•

Leader- Morningstar- orange tabby she cat with blue eyes

Deputy- Fishfang- strong, fierce white she cat with long claws and one red front paw

MC- Splashflight- small black tom with white paws, muzzle and belly

MCA- Yewpaw- shy honey colored she cat with amber eyes.

Warriors-

Ryeflight- tan tom with green eyes.

Firegaze- white tom with fire yellow eyes

Snowtip- black and white she cat with a white tail tip

Lemurtail- white she cat with an orange striped tail. Mates with Brokenjaw

Turtleface- dappled brown she cat

Brokenjaw- b&w tom with a broken jaw

Fangscar- grey tom w/ yellow eyes

Apprentices-

Queens-

Morningstar- orange tabby she cat with blue eyes

Kits-

Gilakit- strong brown tom with tangerine markings and a strong jaw

Sunsetkit- shy honey colored she cat

Chapter 1

Gilakit raced out after his little sister. ""I'm gonna get you, Sunsetkit!" He cried, taking a giant leap. His clumsy but muscular paws tumbled in the grass after his tiny golden tabby sister, who stared after him over her shoulder with her big blue eyes. A huge smile was plastered on her face, and on Gilakit's as well. He landed square on her back haunches, and both siblings tumbled down the grassy clearing, laughing hard.

"Whoa!" Their father, Fallingfeather laughed as they tumbled into his paws. His grey tabby head swiveled around from where he was talking to his sister, Brightshine.

Gilakit got up and stared up at them. "Sorry dad! Sorry, Brightshine!" He scrambled to squeak. Brightshine smiled.

"That's quite alright, little one." She chuckled lightly.

Brightshine was an orange tabby with sleek, short fur and long bangs covering one side of her face. When she turned her face just the right angle, you could see her underdeveloped eye underneath it, covered for a reason. She had a warm smile and two full grown kits, Lemurtail and Turtleface.

Gilakit looked back at Sunsetkit, and back up at Fallingfeather. "Can you play with us, daddy?" He whined, his green eyes shining. "Pleeeaasseee?" Sunsetkit joined in the pleading. "Yes, please?!" They both chimed.

Fallingfeather laughed. "Of course, loves. How about I..." His gaze scanned the camp. "How about I count to ten. Then when I am done, you guys are hidden, and I try to find you!" He suggested. Gilakit squealed with glee.

"Find the mouse! I love that game!!!" He squeaked, bouncing up and down. His fluffy tail flicked in the greenleaf sun. "C'mon, Sunsetkit! Come play with us!" He said happily.

Sunsetkit, with her smaller, gentler frame trotted over from where she was investigating a little pink flower. She had orange powder on her nose. "Sorry!" She hurried to say.

Gilakit laughed. "Whats that yellow stuff on your nose?" He giggled, poking the tip of her muzzle teasingly. "It looks funny!" He was rolling on the ground with laughter. Sunsetkit narrowed her eyes and tackled him.

"Not as funny as you look!" She retorted playfully back, batting at his hindquarters with a honey colored paw. Gilakit giggled and they began rolling in the grass once more, tumbling under the warriors' paws. He bumped into Fishfang, and he immediately backed away as she hissed slightly.

"Oops... Sorry, Fishfang!" He breathed, tucking his tail under him fearfully. He flattened his ears, expecting a cuff up the ears, but Fishfang sighed.

"Its... Its alright..." She said softly. "You didn't mean it... Just watch your paws next time." She replied, surprisingly calm. Gilakit sighed with relief, until she turned her head to Sunsetkit. "You, on the other paw... Where in the Dark Forest are your manners?! I swear, its like the kits are *blind!"*

Sunsetkit crouched in the dirt, nearly in tears. She stared up with wide, moon-sized eyes. Gilakit felt anger well up inside him as Fishfang continued.

"And what in the name of Brokenstar have you got on your nose?! At least make an *attempt* to keep clean, would you?!" She scoffed. Gilakit moved closer to his sister, putting his paw around her to comfort her shaking body. He glared at Fishfang as she picked her way to the middle of the clearing, nose turned up in disgust while Sunsetkit was nearly sobbing in her brother's pelt.

Gilakit burned with anger. *What did she do differently than me?!* He thought to himself furiously, tail fluffed up. He licked Sunsetkit's nose clean gently. "Shh... It okay, Sunsetkit. Let's go tell mother how unfair she was!" He growled under his breath. "*She* can teach her a lesson!"

Sunsetkit sniffled and nodded, and they made their way to their mothers den. Gilakit narrowed his eyes, determined to get Fishfang a beating. *I can't believe she had the fur to do that!!*

"Mama!" He growled as he stormed into the leaders den, Sunsetkit at his side. "Mama!"

Morningstar lifted her orange tabby head, smiling at Gilakit. "Yes love?" She purred, her blue eyes sweeping straight past Sunsetkit and onto her son.

Gilakit didn't notice her act, he was too angry. "Mama, Fishfang just gave Sunsetkit a telling but she didn't even look at me! She was being totally unfair! She made Sunsetkit cry, you have to teach her a lesson!" He squeaked, his tail curled around his sister, expecting Morningstar to rush over to her and comfort her. But she didn't even hlance at Sunsetkit.

"Gilakit, may I speak to you alone, please?" She asked quietly and gently. Sunsetkit nodded and padded out, her tail dragging in the dust. Gilakit watched her go straight to her father, nearly getting run over by Fangscar. He growled something indistinct to her and she cowered, scrambling to her father's side. Morningstar cleared her throat and Gilakit turned his head back to his mother, missing the rest of the scene.

Morningstar beckoned her som with her tail. "Come here, love..." She whispered. Gilakit nestled himself into his mother's belly, looking up at her angry eyes.

"Why does everyone hate Sunsetkit? Is she that different?" He asked his mother, feeling confused and angry about the fact that he was the favored sibling. Morningstar licked the top of his head, rasping her tongue across the top roughly.

"They don't hate her, baby..." She began through licks. "They love her... That is why they are hard on her. Your sister isn't as strong as you, love. She needs more discipline to learn how to be powerful like you and me. She was born a bit behind in strength than you, and she must catch up," she said simply, as if it were the most normal this to say. Gilakit squirmed away from his mother in shock.

His ears were flat against his head in anger.

"And you 'discipline' her by being jerks?! I can't believe you, mom!" He screamed. His mother narrowed her eyes.

"Your sister is weak. You will treat her like everyone else. It is for her own benefit." She growled. Gilakit growled and stormed out of the den. He couldn't believe his mother. He just *couldn't.*

Chapter 2

Gilakit lay in the nursery, glaring across the camp at the cave under the BloodRock where his mother slept. The nursery was lonely, with just Sunsetkit and him sleeping in the large woven bramble-cave, but it was better than sleeping with his mother. He still didn't speak to her, going to Splashflight for water and asking for prey instead of milk, even though he was 2 moons old.

He curled his tail around his sleeping sister, and his belly rumbled. He wished for the sweet, warm milk from his mother, longing for the warm feeling of it guzzling down his throat. But he pushed the fantasy away. *I hate her.* He reminded himself, taking a second to spit in the moss beside him. *She's a meanie!*

He got up and yawned, stretching his brown paws in front of him in a bow. His back was arched and his fur standing up as he yawned, and then wiped the sleep from his eyes as he trotted outside. He looked around at his clanmates. *They look so happy...* He thought to himself. *How can they be happy with* my *mother ruling them?* It didn't make sense to him, he couldn't comprehend it. His mother was just horrible!

He padded over to the fresh kill pile, inspecting his options. The warm greenleaf sun had started to fade, leaving a chilling wind to cool his back as he searched for a suitable meal for he and his sister. After a while, he selected a small but plump mouse by the tail and dragged it towards the nursery, tail fluffed up against the chilling wind. Leaf fall was approaching fast.

When he reached the nursery, his sister poled her head out of the small opening, rubbing her eyes. "Hey, bro," she yawned tiredly, stumbling out. She stretched, and yawned one more time before smacking her lips. "Ooh, mouse!" She said happily. Gilakit smiled and purred.

"Wanna go get Yewpaw?"

Sunsetkit nodded. "Sure thing, bro! But only if you can beat me at a game of Warriors!" She cried, leaping unexpectedly at Gilakit. He jumped back in surprise, paws flailing to get in contact with his sister. He laughed.

A paw connected lightly to his cheek, and he in turn landed a soft blow to Sunsetkit's head, making sure to be gentle enough not to hurt her. She growled playfully and threw all her weight to one side, throwing Gilakit off balance and sending both kits tumbling towards the center of the camp. Gilakit purred and kicked his sister's stomach and she giggled. Then an amused voice sounded from above.

"Hey! Watch your paws, silly!" Lemurtail laughed as they tumbled over her paws. Her eyes were light and friendly as they gazed at Gilakit. When Gilakit met her gaze, he realized she was looking a tad to his right. *What?* He cocked his head to one side, but then decided to drop it. *Probably no big deal anyways...*

Sunsetkit smiled. "Fine, you got me," she admitted modestly. "I'll fetch Yewpaw to help us eat." She trotted off, towards the direction of the medicine den. Gilakit was about to follow her when he heard the distinct call of his mother from the other side of the clearing.

"Gilakit! Come here please!" She called. Gilakit's cheerful expression quickly went sour as he dragged his paws to the nursery where his mother sat. He sat next to her and stared at her paws.

"What." He mumbled, making it clear he didn't want to talk. *I have nothing to say to her.*

Morningstar opened her mouth to respond when a scream erupted from the medicine den. It sounded high, scared...

Feminine.

Gilakit shot up, not missing a beat. Clearly Lemurtail had the same idea, and they raced to the medicine den together before Morningstar grabbed Lemurtail and shoved her away. Gilakit dove into the den and looked over his shoulder to see Morningstar growling over Lemurtail.

"*Leave her!"*

Gilakit backed away. *No... No! Morningstar?!* He turned around, expecting to see his sister's broken, dead body on the ground, twitching and dying. *Oh please let her death be quick!* He begged in his mind, shaking hard in fear. But as he spun around, he saw not Sunsetkit laying dead on the floor, but Yewpaw, with foam and blood at her mouth, the mouse she had been chewing for Sunsetkit open and bleeding with bloodred berry juice. *Deathberries.* Gilakit stared in shock, mouth wide open.

He snapped back into reality and rushed to his cowering sister to soothe her, ushering her out, and shooting a killer glare to his mother as he passed her.

She will not get away with this.

*****

Gilakit was up all night, the horrible images of Yewpaw flashing in his mind. Sunsetkit had left him to sit vigil for her friend. Gilakit looked at her as she huddled beside Splashflight and Snowtip, those were the only cats sitting with her.

When Gilakit finally drifted into a restless sleep, he was haunted by the screams of pain from Yewpaw, and the eager glare of his mother as she watched the medicine den for signs her cruel scheme had worked. He tossed and turned until dawn, when he woke.

It's no use trying to sleep, he thought to himself, getting up to stretch. He sighed, trotting outside to stare at the rising sun. As the stars above disappeared he watched the sky brighten with the sun. Suddenly his sister cane up beside him, sniffling quietly.

"Hey..." She mumbled beside him. Gilakit smiled and licked her nose.

"Hey, sis." He said gently. "You feeling better?" He asked, hoping she was fairing better than him. She didn't respond, just leaning her head on his shoulder and sobbing silently. Wet tears fell onto Gilakit's shoulder and he closed his eyes. They sat there, together,

until the sun rose, starting a new, clean day, hoping this one would be better.

Chapter 3

Gilakit stepped outside with a yawn, stretching. He had grown quite a bit since Yewpaw's death, and today was his apprentice ceremony. He suddenly realized the reality of the day, and whipped around to shake his sister awake.

"Sunsetkit! Sunsetkit, guess what today is?!" He cried in her ear, his eyes gleaming with excitement and his tail fluffed up.

Sunsetkit rubbed her eyes for a second, confused. "Gilakit, I was *sleeping* you big lump!" She mumbled, then she stared at him, her mouth slowly opening wide with excitement. "Apprentices!!!!" They exclaimed together.

Gilakit squealed with excitement. Moving forward, he licked her forehead. "I'll wash you until you shine!" He boasted, washing it vigorously. Sunsetkit laughed and smiled.

"So will I!"

*****

"Gilakit, Sunsetkit!" Morningstar's calls came from out in the testing clearing. Lemurtail finished licking their heads and ushered them out, a worried smile on her face.

"Be careful, loves," she said gently. Lemurtail had become like their second mother, when she moved into the nursery three moons ago expecting Brokenjaw's kits. Gilakit squirmed away and nodded.

"I promise I will," he said to Lemurtail before looking at his sister seriously. Sweat was beading at her brow and her tail was shaking slightly.

He put his paw on her shoulder. "Don't worry, Sunsetkit. I'll go easy on you. I promise to let you win, okay?" He said gently, trying to soothe her. Gilakit himself was nervous, not for himself, but for his

sister. *I will protect her.* He promised himself, setting his strong jaw. *I won't let Morningstar touch her.*

As he neared his mother, Lemurtail stopped following them, as it was the rule that no cat except Morningstar could watch the fight. Gilakit gulped as he pushed through the concealing bushes and into the scuffled dirt clearing where his mother sat.

"Gilakit, Sunsetkit, you have reached your sixth moon and are ready to have your first apprentice test. If you fail, you will have to wait another three moons as a prisoner before getting another chance, this time against me. If you fail that test, you will be executed. Do you both understand what is at stake?" She began. Both kits nodded, and she continued. "Then we will begin the rules. One: You must use your claws. Pain activates adrenaline, and adrenaline activates instinct to fight. Two: You cannot do anything but your very best. If it is found out that you skimped out, both cats in the fight will be executed. So you had better hope for your own sake that everyone does their best. That is all. Each of you, stand opposite to each other and wait for my signal."

Gilakit nodded ever so slightly to Sunsetkit before moving to his place. Morningstar was eyeing her daughter hungrily. *She thinks I'll win so she can kill her! I don't think so!* Gilakit growled in his mind with disgust. *I'll show her!*

Gilakit crouched opposite to his sister, taking a deep breath.

"One." His mother began counting. *I will protect her.* "Two." *I won't let Morningstar touch her.* "Begin." *I am stronger than her.*

He leaped at his sister, claws out. He swiped at her cheek gently, but enough to draw blood. Hearing her cry of surprise, he winced. *I'm so sorry!* He screamed in his mind. Sunsetkit seemed to understand and swiped at his flanks, drawing blood. He barely felt it, throwing his weight on top of her and pinning her, clawing at the sides of her shoulders, even though he knew it was correct to claw at her belly with his hind paws.

Sunsetkit kicked his belly as hard as she could, and Gilakit took the chance to fake his imbalance, wobbling on his hind paws before

falling backwards, letting Sunsetkit pin him. She bit his ear, tearing out a chunk. Blood ran down his face from the wound, but Gilakit didn't notice. All his attention was trained on his act.

Gilakit struggled under his sisters grasp, and managed to wriggle a front paw out from her grasp. He used it to bat at her face, trying to unbalance her. He ignored the urge to kick her belly, knowing it was the better choice. *I have to let her win!* He told himself again as he felt her sister's claws on his chest. She reached down to thrust her nose into his throat as if to kill him, signifying her the winner.

Sunsetkit released him and helped him to his paws before they turned to Morningstar, who was staring angrily at Gilakit. He flinched, closing his eyes and waiting for her wrath, but she just sighed. After a moment, he heard her take in a breath to speak.

"It was a um... Tie..." She said, a flash of annoyance in her tone as she stared straight at Gilakit. "You will both be apprenticed tonight." Gilakit felt a surge of pride. *I did it! I defied her!* He cried with triumph to himself, grinning. He looked at Sunsetkit excitedly.

She had the same look of disbelief and triumph on her face as she stared at Gilakit. "We're gonna be apprentices!" She cried, and Gilakit purred with joy, wanting to cry out to the world his happiness. *We did it.*

Chapter 4

"All cats old enough to kill, please gather beneath the bloodrock for a clan meeting. Gilakit curled his lip at the words his mother used. *Does she have to be so cruel about it?* He wondered bitterly in his mind before he bounced out of the nursery beside his sister. "Today we welcome my kits as apprentices."

Gilakit settled himself beside Lemurtail near the back. Her plump, round belly sagged under her, and Gilakit smiled. Maybe Sunsetkit and him could finally have a friend. Lemurtail was so kind, surely the kits she bore would be just as kind as her.

"Gilakit, step forward!" Morningstar's call broke his thoughts and he jumped, and darted up to the top of the bloodrock. This is the rock where Morningstar made her first kill, Brightshine's kit, and Lemurtail and Turtlefaces brother, and that was the origin of its name. It was also rumored that she had killed her sister here too, on that very same day, but Gilakit didn't want to believe that. The very thought that *one* cat had died there made his skin crawl with disgust. He shook his head to clear it and gazed up at his mother, trying to forget all of his sour feelings towards her and enjoy the ceremony.

"My dear son, I am proud to give you your apprentice name. Gilapaw, your mentor will be Fangscar, he is ready for an apprentice. He has received excellent training from his leader, and I trust this strong tom to pass on all he learned from me to you." Morningstar rested her muzzle on Gilapaw's forehead, and in return Gilapaw licked her shoulder respectfully before turning back to face his mentor. He couldn't help but wince at the sight of him.

Fangscar's face was hidden in so many scars and scabs from battle Gilapaw could barely see his features underneath. His pelt was ragged with more scars, and he had his claws unsheathed as he padded over to Gilapaw. *Does he always keep them unsheathed?* Gilapaw wondered as he tentatively touched noses with the big, scary tom. Fangscar nodded as if to make the moment official

before turning to watch the rest of the ceremony.

Sunsetkit was staring up at her mother warily, she knew and understood the hatred of her size that her mother had for her, and knew how much Morningstar longed to kill her. Sunsetkit still woke up from nightmares about Morningstar.

"Sunsetpaw, your mentor will be Brokenjaw. I am sure he will be the perfect match for your skill and size, and you will learn a lot from this tom." Morningstar said flatly, as if she were suddenly bored. She barely skimmed Sunsetpaw's forehead, and recoiled with a soft hiss as Sunsetpaw made a move to lick her shoulder. Gilapaw growled low under his breath. *The mangy foxheart!* He yowled to himself, unsheathing his claws to rip out the grass beneath him. Sunsetpaw flinched at her mother's obvious warning and hurried to Brokejaw's side, touching noses with him and then clinging to his side. Lemurtail stood on the opposing side of Sunsetpaw, wapping her tail around her protectively.

Morningstar cleared her throat. "Meeting dismissed." She said and leaped back down, bounding straight back to Fallingfeather, who was glaring at her. His tail was flicking with anger as Morningstar looked at him, confused. She said something Gilapaw couldn't hear, and Fallingfeather just looked more angry. Gilapaw crept closer.

"I can't believe you just said that!!" He spat. Gilapaw widened his eyes at the look his father was giving Morningstar. He looked like he wanted to kill her. Morningstar rolled her eyes.

"Said *what,* you big lump?" She pushed him over playfully, and Fallingfeather hissed.

"*Don't* touch me!!" He yowled, jumping back with an infuriated hiss. "I cannot *believe* you!!! You give this big, proud speech about our son, and then you act like Sunsetpaw is an enemy cat! What made you even *think* to do that?!" He screamed, his fur bristled on his back. Sunsetpaw poked her head out of the apprentices den, her eyes widened in surprise and fear. Gilapaw watched with wide eyes too; he had *never* seen his father so angry.

Morningstar looked at him blankly. "She's weak! Can you blame

me? The only reason she's alive to this day is because of *you!"* She spat back, clearly angry her mate had the nerve to address her this way. Gilapaw tensed his muscles, ready to leap on his mother if she made a move. His tail lashed. *Is she really this blind?!*

Fallingfeather scoffed with disbelief. "You mean you actually considered *killing* her?! How could you do such a thing, Morningstar?! That is absolutely *foxhearted!!"* He yowled, backing away. He was shaking with anger. "If this is the real you, Morningstar--which I hope deep within my heart isn't--then I- I deeply regret ever thinking you were a good cat. I- I love the cat that I knew *before* this stupid mess!" He yowled.

By now there was a crowd around them, all watching tensely as the two mates fought. Morningstar was glared at them all with slitted eyes. Gilapaw felt uneasy, and he moved closer to Lemurtail, suddenly not liking the anger in the air.

Fallingfeather went on with a shaking breath. "I loved you, Morningstar. But if you don't love *both* of *my* kits *equally,* then I guess I was much too blind to your true colors!" He said, backing farther away. He then got up, and pushed his way towards Gilapaw and Sunsetpaw, looking at them both sadly.

"I'm so sorry she did this to you, Sunsetpaw. I had no idea, I'll never let any-" he broke off with a choked gasp, his eyes widening in surprise, and crumpled to the ground limply, with blood welling in his neck. As he fell, his body revealed a seething Morningstar, teeth clenched and panting, shaking with anger. She stared at the rest of the shaking clan.

"Go to your *dens!!"* She barked, tail still lashing. Sunsetpaw and Gilapaw clutched each other, and scrambled away from their mother, racing to the apprentices den, too shocked to comprehend the fact that their father had just died, defending Sunsetpaw.

Chapter 5

Gilapaw stared out of the apprentices den fearfully, watching his mother hiss at the clan. "Go! Leave! I have unfinished business!" She spat at everyone near her. "Go!"

The clan hurried away, not wanting to get on Morningstar's bad side. They all knew what happened then. Sunsetpaw whimpered behind Gilapaw, and he moved closer to her as they watched out the entrance of the den. Morningstar was growling at Fallingfeather's body.

Then she grabbed it, yowling in anger and shaking her head vigorously, clawing and shredding the body until nothing remained but an assorted pile of limbs and tufts of fur drenched with sticky blood. Gilapaw looked away in horror, pulling his sister away from the entrance of the den. She was shaking, staring up at Gilapaw.

"F-F-Falling-Fallingfeather... H-He just..." She couldn't finish the sentence, she was too terrified. Gilapaw licked her nose, closing his eyes and wishing this was all one horrible dream. *I promise I will never think of her as my mother again.* He vowed to himself, stroking Sunsetpaw's spine gently with his tail to calm her, and they stayed, huddled against each other, until they both fell asleep.

*****

Gilapaw woke to Fangscar's claws jabbing in his ribs. He grunted. "Wake up!" His mentor barked, and Gilapaw rubbed his eyes sleepily. Then Fangscar growled and sliced his cheek roughly with one single claw. "*Up!"*

Gilapaw shot up, yelping in pain, and stared up at Fangscar, who was obviously in a bad mood. "What?" He asked, annoyed as he rubbed his cheek. Fangscar scoffed and rolled his eyes.

"I ask you to get up, you *get up.* No questions should be asked!" He answered gruffly and disappeared, clearly impatient. Gilapaw got

up, stretching and finally dragging himself outside. It was still dark, and the reek of his fathers blood still hadn't faded from the clearing. Gilapaw tried not to look at the extra tufts of grey tabby fur littering the middle of the clearing. He sighed.

"Fangscar, its still dark!" He pointed out, looking at the sky. Fangscar whipped around, holding up a paw as if ready to strike.

"No. Questions. Asked." He growled again, this time slower and more angry. Gilapaw shrank back, and sighed. *So much for sleep...*

Fangscar led him out of the camp, nodding to the night guard, Fishfang as they passed her. They weaved through the trees as the forest lightened with the hints of dawn, until they finally reached the Training Clearing.

The clearing was littered with little droplets of blood and a few tufts of fur here and there, from training. Gilapaw stood in the middle of the clearing, awaiting instructions. He curled his fluffy brown tail over his paws.

Without warning, Fangscar attacked him, knocking him over and clawing his back. He pinned Gilapaw, and, acting on instinct, Gilapaw made his hind legs kick back and fourth on Fangscar's lower belly, his claws out. Fangscar growled and bit Gilapaw's ear, and Gilapaw felt a shot of pain flash through the middle of his ear.

Gilapaw suddenly had an idea. Forcing his screaming limps to relax, he fell back, his head hanging limp in defeat. Fangscar laughed.

"Ha! You'll have to do better than that if you ever want Morningstar to make you warrior!" He taunted, sinking his claws into Gilapaw's shoulders. Gilapaw waited for him to nose his neck, and then with all his strength, he head-butted his chest, surging upward and sending Fangscar flying. He hit hard against the bark of a nearby tree with a thump.

Before his mentor got up, Gilapaw rushed over, placing a triumphant paw on Fangscar's dazed chest. "What was *that* for?!" Gilapaw demanded immediately, his eyes angry. Fangscar looked at him expectantly, and Gilapaw raised an eyebrow, confused.

"Your *paw,"* he finally sighed, exasperated. Gilapaw scrambled off his mentor, mumbling an apology. When Fangscar got up, brushing himself off, he didn't look aggressive any more. "I wanted to test your instincts to see how that test *should* have gone," he said simply. Gilapaw gulped. *Oh no. Sunsetpaw, I'm sorry!*

But instead of cuffing him on the ear and dragging him away, Fangscar just stayed put. "You obviously faked your test, but I don't think Sunsetpaw did. So you will both be spared. Morningstar has told me herself." He said flatly. Gilapaw let out the breath he hadn't realized he was holding.

"Thank you, Fangscar." He gasped out, remembering his manners. "I promise I won't let you down."

Chapter 6

Gilapaw sat outside the nursery anxiously beside Brokenjaw and Sunsetpaw. The muffled cries and yowls of pain coming from the walls sent chills down Gilapaw's back. *What if the kitting goes wrong? What if Lemurtail doesn't make it?* He fidgeted with his tail. *Oh... Please let her be okay!*

Then Gilapaw's wandering eyes caught glance of Morningstar's cruel gaze, watching from her den. Her eyes glowed through the rain pattering outside the roof that extended out of the nursery. Gilapaw suddenly felt his belly knot with dread. *No, Morningstar. Over my dead body!* He growled, knowing she was plotting to kill any weak kits. He couldn't let it happen. He couldn't.

When the yowls finally subsided, Sunsetpaw looked at her mentor. "You go first," she offered kindly, and Brokenjaw gave a grateful nod, scrambling in.

Gilapaw heard his gasp of joy from inside the nursery, and then he poked his head outside. "Sunsetpaw, come see!" He purred excitedly. Gilapaw trailed after his sister.

Lemurtail was sitting, purring a deep purr, while three tiny kits suckled at her belly. Two she kits, one white with black and grey stripes on her tail, and one a grey tabby with her mother's green eyes. Gilapaw purred as well, until he saw the third kit, and then his purr fell silent.

The grey tabby tom, just like his father, was much smaller than the other two, and he didn't mewl to the touch. He didn't suckle, or make a move towards his mother's belly until Brokenjaw desperately nosed him closer to the others. Even when he suckled, he needed assistance to stay there, or he would fall back every once and awhile. Gilapaw gulped, sniffing the air worriedly for his mother.

Sunsetpaw was purring. "Oh, they're beautiful! But, Lemurtail... This

ones so small..." She trailed off fearfully. Then Lemurtail growled, and stared straight at the entrance. It was almost spooky, her eyes had a sudden clarity. It was as if she could see, but Gilapaw knew now that she was blind. It made no sense. But he pushed that thought away. Right now, he had to focus on the problem at hand.

Lemurtail marched out into the rain, growling. She marched straight to Morningstar's den, where she was sitting calmly, waiting. Turtleface, Lemurtail's sister, got up to stand beside her sister protectively.

Lemurtail growled. "*Morningstar!"* She screeched with anger as she came up in front of her. Morningstar smiled.

"Lemurtail... I hear a runt has been born... What a surprise! A runt born of the *blind* and the *crippled!!!"* Gilapaw's mother spat the words as if they were dung on her prey. Lemurtail looked as if she wanted to tear Morningstar apart. "Shall we see them?" Morningstar cooed, and made a break for the nursery. Lemurtail, quick as a flash, dove under her with perfect accuracy, and knocked her leaders paws from under her. She then slithered out and slammed on top of Morningstar, knocking the breath from her and pinning her.

When Fishfang made a move towards her leader, Turtleface raced ahead, pinning the deputy. Fishfang spat at Turtleface. "You fox-hearted traitor!" She growled, writhing in Turtleface's grasp.

Meanwhile, Morningstar had dove from Lemurtail's grip, and made a beeline for the nursery. Before Lemurtail could get to her paws, Morningstar snatched the kit up from his nest, and dangling it mockingly out of reach from Lemurtail. She gave an agonized yowl and screeched with anger. "I will *KILL you!!!"* Lemurtail screamed, leaping up to knock the kit from Morningstar's paw. She bit her throat, ripping a gargantuan hole. Gilapaw watched, eyes wide as blood poured from his mother's throat, her eyes glaring with a world of hatred towards Lemurtail.

Lemurtail stood, panting with shock and anger, over Morningstar as she gurgled something inaudible before falling back, limp and most definitely dead. Morningstar was dead.

Gilapaw looked at his sister with shock and disbelief, and, unbelievably, happiness. Joy filled his eyes as he realized Lemurtail and Turtleface had finally set them free from their evil mother.

*****

As they set the body up for vigil, Lemurtail looked at Gilapaw. She had regained her sight permanently, the final gift StarClan granted her for saving the clan. She licked Gilapaw's forehead guiltily. "I'm sorry, Gilapaw... I didn't mean to really kill her-" She said gently. "A-Are you going to sit with her?"

Gilapaw looked at her in bewilderment. "Are you kidding?! I wouldn't sit with my mother if my life depended on it! She's the devil!" He gasped. "She tried to murder my sister and killed my father!" He answered, faster than he anticipated. *Do I really feel that way? Is that bad?*

Lemurtail licked his forehead. "Baby... I know how you feel about her, but be careful what you wish for. I'll leave you alone," she said gently, kissing his nose and padding back to the nursery to leave Gilapaw to wonder, *What am I doing?*

Chapter 7

Gilapaw watched from his den as the rain subsided, leaving the burn marks scarring the foliage from when the lightning struck the camp. He saw Lemurtail looked at Brokenjaw, and smile, stepping up to the blo- highrock. "Who will be our leader?" She called out clearly, casting a worried glance at Fishfang, imprisoned for her traitorous actions.

Brokenjaw smiled back up at his mate, after the clan murmured for a moment among themselves. They nodded to Brokenjaw and he turned to Lemurtail. "Well, Lemurtail... The clan is hoping you would..." He began. Lemurtail stared at the clan in shock, blushing slightly.

"Oh... Uhm, I'd be honored... But only if..." She paused, staring straight at Brokenjaw. "Only if Badgerfang will serve as my deputy." *Who's Badgerfang...?* Gilapaw wondered in confusion. Brokenjaw looked around, confused.

"Brokenjaw, step forward. By the powers of StarClan, I call down on my great ancestors to free you of your cruel name. Brokenjaw, I give you a name not meant to shame you with your imperfections, but meant to frame your perfections for all to see. I name you Badgerfang." Lemurstar finished. Badgerfang gave a loving look at Lemurstar and purred.

"I'd be honored to lead alongside you, Lemurstar."

*****

It had been three moons. Gilapaw was now 9 moons, and Lemurstar's kits 3. Fangscar had been training Gilapaw hard as he could, from sunup to sundown, and Gilapaw was exhausted. He still insisted on claws-out training, even though Lemurstar had told him off multiple times for it. Fangscar was fed up, and spent his extra time ranting to Fishfang in hushed voices.

Whatever time he wasn't spending training, Gilapaw spend with Wishkit, the pretty silver tabby in Lemurstar's litter. They would play games, eat together, talk, he was inseparable from the beautiful she cat.

Gilapaw yawned and stretched as he padded outside. Today was his free day from training, as promised. His muscles ached and his scratches stung as he trotted over to his honey colored sister. His cheerful mood dissolved as he saw his sister's face.

"What's wrong?" He asked. Sheflattened her ears guiltily and stared down at her paws.

"Gilapaw I-" she was broken off as Lemurstar called from the highrock:

"All cats old enough to swim against the mighty current gather to hear my words!" Sunsetpaw jumped, and sighed. Gilapaw stared in confusion at her.

"What in StarClan are you moping about?" He wondered.

"Today, with great joy, I shall name the new medicine cat apprentice. Sunsetpaw, please step forward."

Gilapaw gasped and stared at Sunsetpaw. "What?" He whispered. She avoided his gaze and picked her way to the top of the rock, where Lemurstar was stepping back to give her father some room. He was old now, the grey streaks on his muzzle growing. *He'll be retiring soon.* Gilapaw thought with a jolt. *He needed an apprentice.*

Splashflight touched his nose to each of Sunsetpaw's shoulders before lifting his chin to the sky. "I call upon my starry ancestors to blaze through this apprentice. She has chosen the ways of your noble code, and wishes to follow the path of stars." He began. "Sunsetpaw, is it your wish to heal your clan with everything you have, even at the expenses it costs?"

Sunsetpaw had a determined look on her face, setting her small, gentle jaw, and lifting her chin. Her response rang clearly in the chilled leaf fall air. "I do, Splashflight." She called confidently.

Gilapaw smiled.

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I name you Sunsetpaw, medicine cat apprentice of DewClan." Sunsetpaw turned proudly, her eyes sparkling with pride as the clan cheered her name happily. Gilapaw cheered the loudest for her, happy his sister finally belonged somewhere. *She deserves it.* He thought with a wide, proud smile.

Sunsetpaw bounced off the Highrock and nuzzled Gilapaw. "You're not mad?" She asked, her eyes still glittering. Gilapaw purred and licked her nose.

"Of course not, sis. I love you."

*****

Gilapaw lifted his nose from under his tail, his ears swiveling around. He sniffed, and his eyes flew wide with alarm. He smelled lots of new cats, and they definitely didn't sound friendly.

Gilapaw crept out of the apprentices den, he was the only apprentice inside. Poking his head out cautiously, he saw Fangscar walking inside. A pang of anger surged through him. *He was on guard duty!!!*

Famgscar looked around for spies, before making a beeline to the rocks where Fishfang sat, sleeping in her nest. A tight vine bound her front paws.

Gilapaw tore his eyes away from his traitorous mentor, staring at the nursery. It was all the way across the clearing from his den, and there were two murderers loose and running freely in the camp. There was no doubt that they wanted to kill both Lemurstar *and* her kits.

Gilapaw took a deep breath. *I can make a run for it now and not be caught!* He thought to himself. Fangscar and Fishfang were busy chatting. If he pelted fast enough, he could maneuver around them.

Taking a deep breath, he crouched down on his haunches, rocking back for momentum. Uttering a silent prayer to StarClan, he shot out, his paws flying across the grassy clearing. Fishfang shouted

something indistinct, and so did Fangscar. Gilapaw could feel their thumping paws behind them. They were hard on his trail and determined to catch him.

"*Lemurstar!!"* Gilapaw screamed, trying to sound an alarm. "We're under attack!" He was tail lengths away now. *I'm gonna make it!*

Just as the thought flickered across his mind, deep claws ripped his haunches and tore him to the ground, and Gilapaw turned to see Fishfang snarling over him, pinning him tightly.

"You are a dead cat, son!" She growled in his ear, hatred bathing her mew. "That was a *big* mistake!"

Chapter 8

Gilapaw's fur rose in fear as Fishfang turned her head to Fangscar. "Sound the signal!" She hissed, and Fangscar dipped his head, running off. Then she turned to him. She had a hunger in her eyes, the kind of hunger a hunting cat has when they see a juicy squirrel. She licked her lips and played a claw against Gilapaw's eyelids, teasing him as she reviewed the best way to kill him.

"What a disappointment you turned out to be..." She whispered in his ear with a hinted snarl. "More of a disappointment then *Sunsetpaw*."

This infuriated Gilapw and he kicked Fishfang hard in the stomach. "You fox hearted dung-breath!" He growled, staring her straight in the eyes. She bared her teeth and lashed her tail, holding up an unsheathed claw.

Suddenly a yowl sounded from the camp entrance, and the clearing was a sea of cats. Yowls of outrage came from the sleeping clan as the rouges broke into the carefully woven dens to claw the warriors awake. Gilapaw saw Badgerfang fighting bravely against two toms advancing to the nursery.

Fishfang had disappeared in the flood of rouges, and Gilapaw was free without a scratch. But not for long. An unfamiliar she cat blocked his path to the nursery, greeting him with a strong aimed blow to the chest. Gilapaw was sent to the dirt once more, and a stinging fire rushed just barely above his eye. He felt the blood ooze out of his new battle wound, but he pushed the pain away and got to his paws.

Gilapaw'a opponent spat with anticipation, and then clawed at his shoulders. Gilapaw howled, and pushed off the ground with his paws to land on her back. Opening his jaw, he bit the base of her tail so hard he heard bone shatter beneath his teeth with a *crack!* With a screech of pain and anger, the she cat pelted for the hills, her tail dragging limp behind her.

No more tail for her, Gilapaw though angrily before racing ahead to the nursery.

Gilapaw was tail lengths from the nursery when a whirling blur of ginger fur collided with his flank, sending him reeling to the ground. An orange tom with a scary scar across his moon-faded eye leaped at him without hesitating a heartbeat, claws out and ready to rip flesh.

Gilapaw rolled out of reach swiftly, taking a bite to his tail-tip as he slithered under his attacker. Battering his belly with thorn-sharp claws, his opponent growled, lifting up s paw to kick Gilapaw against the ground. The wind knocked out of him, he fell limp, defenseless to the fight while pain shot through Gilapaw's entire chest.

The tom pinned him, sinking his claws slowly into his chest. His moon-blind eye stared at Gilapaw, and it ran a chill down his spine. *If I die now, let it be fighting,* Gilapaw thought, lifting a paw to strike his attacker's cheek. He was released with a howl, and Gilapaw scrambled out of the way, crouching and ready for his next attack.

The scarred tom mirrored him, snarling and spitting. They moved in a slow circle, each cat waiting for the other to make a move. Gilapaw was running battle tactics in his head, trying to think of one to attack with. He scanned the ground with his green eyes, taking in his surroundings. He finally selected an attack, and poised himself for the move.

This was the hardest move his mentor had taught him, and Gilapaw had never gotten it right. But it was the only one worth trying, it was the only move ridiculous enough to surprise his opponent. He rehearsed it in his mind and then took a deep breath.

Here goes nothing!

Gilapaw shot forwards, making to dove underneath his attacker's belly, and the tom smiled, readying himself. When he was almost there, Gilapaw suddenly reared up, landing perfectly rehearsed blows on the toms exposed head, and then dropping down to dive under his once more exposed belly to dart to safety. Once out, he

turned to see his confused opponent shaking his head, and Gilapaw took the chance to leap up on top of him, raking his back relentlessly, dodging the blind slaps from his paws.

The tom finally managed to buck him off, and sent Gilapaw flying into the dirt, dazed, before pelting out of the battle. Holding a paw to his jarred jaw, Gilapaw watched with satisfaction. *He was all looks, no bravery.*

Gilapaw got up, scanning for the nursery. He had lost it in the battle, and he was extremely disoriented with all the unfamiliar cats. As he scanned the clearing, he saw bodies littering the ground, and he felt sick to his stomach. They were outnumbered greatly, and losing fast.

Suddenly a screech of pain rose above the rest, coming from behind Gilapaw. He whipped around and shoved his way past the crowd. He knew that call all too well.

It was Sunsetpaw.

Chapter 9

Gilapaw shoved through the crowd towards the scream, hoping desperately his sister was okay. *Please please be alright!* He begged to himself, tears in his eyes. *I can't lose my sister now!*

Gilapaw burst through the Medicine Den foliage and ran towards the pained whimpers from his sister. He saw Sunsetpaw lying in the dirt, sobbing over a black and white lump of fur. Gilapaw's eyes widened, and he rushed to his blood soaked sister.

"Splashflight..." He breathed, his eyes clouded with sorrow. "Oh, Sunsetpaw...."

Sunsetpaw looked up at him with tear-streaked eyes. Her pelt was torn with blood from both herself and her mentor, and she had a paw on his blood-soaked body in mourning. She let out a choked sob. "H-He's gone.... They ripped him to shreds!" She whispered, shaking with anger and grief. "They killed him!"

Gilapaw licked her forehead, trying to soothe her, trying to calm her shaking body. "Sunsetpaw... He's gone to StarClan now... There's nothing we can do."

Sunsetpaw sobbed and nodded, closing her eyes and rising to her paws. Gilapaw did the same, looking around the camp. Suddenly, as the battle screeches cut through Gilapaw's eardrums, one yowl rose above the rest.

"Fishfang is dead!"

As Gilapaw watched, the enemy rouges turned their heads, and the battered, weak clan clawed them when they had a chance. Fangscar broke away first. "Retreat!" He cried, and the rouges tore themselves after him, with yowls of fury and defeat. As soon as the cats disappeared through the bushes, Gilapaw felt a dizzying rush in his head and looked at his paws. Blood was pooling at the dirt beneath him, and his legs suddenly buckled beneath him.

"Gilapaw!" Sunsetpaw was instantly alert, and at his side. A stinging pain shot through the underside of Gilapaw's right foreleg, and he saw a deep cut there, oozing blood. Stars suddenly swirled and danced above him, making the leaf fall sun sparkle like diamonds.

"He's losing blood!" Sunsetpaw gasped. "Oh Splashflight, what do I do?!" She wailed to herself, desperately holding wads of cobwebs to Gilapaw's underarm.

Gilapaw's vision seemed to flash in slow motion before him, and he looked up at Sunsetpaw. Her voice echoed in his mind.
"Hold on, Gilapaw," she said. "I'll save you."

*****

Gilapaw woke with a pounding in his head and a shooting pain in his sore body. He groaned, and instantly his sister's paws were poking and prodding him, worried.

"You're awake! Thank StarClan, I was worried I messed up!" She breathed. Gilapaw put a paw to his head, trying to stop the pounding from beating through his skull.

"How... How long was I...?" He said, his eyes closed as he tried to stay awake.

Sunsetpaw hesitated. "Just a day," she said. "Wishkit was asking to see you a lot yesterday, she was really worried about you," she said as she ducked back into the herb store for a moment. Her mew was muffled by he rock as she continued. "Lemurstar called a meeting yesterday. The clan is really weak, we have almost no warriors," she said, her tiny sunset colored head poking out of the cave opening again. She pulled herself out, and shook her pelt of the herb dust.

Gilapaw perked his ears, interested. "Yes? What are we gonna do?" He inquired.

Sunsetpaw sat down, laying the wad of herbs down beside her paws. She curled her tail neatly around her paws. "Lemurstar wants to lead a patrol into the Twolegplace looking for recruits." She said simply. Gilapaw's eyes widened.

"What?! She's crazy! We can't have kittypets in the clan, we're wild cats!" He cried, struggling to get up. Sunsetpaw placed her gentle paw on his chest, pushing him back down.

"Stay down, Gilapaw. I need to tell you more." She instructed firmly. "Lemurstar has already decided. The patrol is getting ready to leave tomorrow at sunhigh."

Gilapaw reluctantly lay back down, staring at his sister. "Sunsetpaw, how are you getting along, you know... With Splashflight gone?" Gilapaw finally asked the question nagging his mind. The old tom had died before Sunsetpaw had even a day with him.

Sunsetpaw shifted slightly. "I'm not Sunsetpaw anymore..." She said quietly. "I'm called Sunsetpool. Splashflight mentors me in my sleep. StarClan grants me access every night." She answered. Gilapaw smiled.

"Sunsetpool. I love it." He purred, trying to comfort his sister. She looked suddenly sad.

Suddenly she spoke. "You may get up, now, Gilapaw. I just wanted to tell you that... You'll be fine." She said quietly.

Gilapaw smiled and got up, licking his sister on the nose. "I love you, sis," he said affectionately before bounding out.

*****

"Snowtip! Turtleface! Ryeflight! Badgerfang! Come to my den, I must speak to you about your mission!" Lemurstar called, her blue eyes scanning the clearing like a hawk. Gilapaw hurried up to her.

"Lemurstar!" He called. "Lemurstar, may I come on the patrol?" He called. A day had passed, and the patrol was about to leave. Lemurstar turned her head to her adoptive son.

"Gilapaw, you're just an apprentice... You can't possibly go..." She began, flabbergasted. Gilapaw persisted.

"Lemurstar, I can sneak into places the senior warriors can't. I can sneak into the dens to talk to the kittypets. I can be useful!" He said, staring at his mother. "Promise!"

Lemurstar sighed, looking at the ground. With a heavy meow, she answered. "Ok, alright." She said with an exasperated huff. Gilapaw felt his heart flutter. "But *don't* wander off and do *everything* the warriors tell you!" She looked at him seriously. "Ok?"

"Yes! I promise, thank you!" He yowled, bouncing up in joy. He was going on the patrol!

Chapter 10

Gilapaw ducked out of Lemurstar's den beside Snowtip, heading straight for the medicine den to collect his traveling herbs when he was met by Wishkit. Her eyes were round and sad. "Gilapaw, you're leaving on the patrol?!" She cried, her eyes wide. "You could get hurt!"

Gilapaw licked her forehead lovingly, grateful for his friend's concern. "I'll be surrounded by all the senior warriors. They'll keep me safe," he reasoned. She nuzzled his flank sadly with her dainty nose in farewell.

"Good luck, Gilapaw. Be careful." She mewed sorrowfully into his fur. Gilapaw in turn nuzzled her cheek and nodded.

"I will. I promise." He said and bounded back to the medicine den before she could say another word to convince him to stay.

*****

Gilapaw looked nervously at Sunsetpool as he gathered at the entrance of the camp. The sun was at it's highest point and the patrol was bidding it's final farewells to the clan.

Snowtip nuzzled Lemurstar, whispering something affectionately in her ear that made both friends chuckle. Ryeflight was looking fondly at the clan while Badgerfang and Turtleface bid farewell to their family and the kits. Finally, the patrol was ready.

Gilapaw nodded firmly to Lemurstar, who stared back at him, flicking the tip pf her tail. "I bid you all good luck, and I wish you a safe journey. May StarClan grant us the luck of finding new warriors." She said. The rest of the clan nodded and murmured in agreement, and the patrol around him lifted their heads proudly.

"We will not let you down, Lemurstar." Badgerfang said, dipping his head. "Lets go."

They patrol nodded and the clan cheered their response as they padded out of the camp in a single file, lifting their chins. Gilapaw brought up the rear of the line, watching for any trouble. They passed the hostile twoleg clearing and the waterfall cave, and finally they reached the edge of the territory. Standing in a line at the edge, they all looked at each other, hesitant.

Finally Snowtip broke the silence. "What do you think's out there?" She ventured, her voice quiet. Gilapaw stared ahead at the sandy moor ahead of him, filled with rocks and little patches of dead grass. A little tiny spiked lizard skittered slowly across the hill ahead of them, its legs swinging back and fourth like a dance.

"Twolegs, I hope," Badgerfang responded after a heartbeat. "And wild seeking kittypets."

Gilapaw looked at each of his companions, itching to get on his way. No one dared make a move to be the first out of the territory. So Gilapaw took a deep breath, and reached a paw over the line, leaving the safety of the damp grass and stepping onto the hot, red sand. His paw pads burned, but Gilapaw didn't care. He stepped tentatively ahead, low in a hunter's crouch. After a heartbeat or two, the others followed, and they headed forward in a wary possession, ears pricked for danger.

Soon Gilapaw felt the uneasy feeling in his chest ease, the twisted knot in his stomach unravel and he lifted his chin higher, slowly easing out of his crouch with the others as e grew more confident with each pawstep.

Snowtip gazed around with awe. "It's so barren... Where's the Twolegplace anyways?" She asked as they stopped to rest. As Gilapaw licked his chapped, cracked pads, he saw the sun was lowering itself in the sky. He sighed at the green spiky plants that dotted the hot red sand around him.

"Lemurstar said it was somewhere this way," Ryeflight answered in his hoarse meow from behind him. "When the ancient DewClan was driven out all those moons ago, they took shelter in a giant Twolegplace!" He panted. "I remember the elders telling me stories about their kithood in the Twolegplace when I was just a wee

sprout."

Gilapaw looked back over at the hill in front of him. Ryeflight was almost an elder himself, and Gilapaw wondered why Lemurstar had chosen such an old and vulnerable cat to come on the journey with them. But now he understood. He knew all about it.

Badgerfang took the chance to step up. "Lemurstar said it was near, so we should trust her!" He declared, his eyes the slightest bit disgusted that his clanmates were doubting his leader and mate, whom he obviously trusted with his life.

Gilapaw nodded in agreement as he got to his paws, wincing as one of them broke open on the rough sand. The sand seeped onto the split and stung the wound, but he ignored it. "We should keep going, Ryeflight. It must be just over this hill!" He reasoned.

Ryeflight looked at him, his eyes clouded with doubt and worry. "I don't know, Gilapaw. It could be wiped out, we could never reach it."

Baderfang rounded on Ryeflight. "It can't! Lemurstar said it was so, it is so!" He said angrily, his eyes wide with fear and worry.

Snowtip and Turtleface looked at each other and pulled the toms off of each other. "Fighting won't get us anywhere you mouse brains!" Snowtip said, sighing with exasperation. "Cut it out!" Turtleface looked as if she agreed, and Badgerfang sighed.

"You trust your leader, don't you, Ryeflight?" He asked, his eyes tired and worried. He was the head of the patrol, and, having so much weight on his shoulders, Gilapaw understood his temper.

Ryeflight nodded. "I do. But I don't know if the fact from all those moons ago is still fact. Times change, Badgerfang. Sometimes Twolegs die out. You never know," he said.

Badgerfang pondered this for a minute, his crooked jaw tense with annoyance. "Alright. But we still can't go back without at least four more warrior-ready cats. We only have one apprentice and one litter of kits in the clan, Ryeflight! The weight of our survival lies on

my shoulders!" He cried, his eyes closed. He shook his head and turned away to start again on their journey. "We have to make our efforts at least count for something."

Chapter 11

Gilapaw trudged on, limping on his injured paw through the coarse sand. Snowtip was beside him, panting, and Ryeflight was falling behind. The sun was setting, touching the horizon and setting the sky to purple and red flames, and they still hadn't passed the desert.

Gilapaw finally collapsed on the ground, exhausted and unable to go on. Sweat was pouring down his brow and he groaned quietly. Snowtip rushed to his side.

"Badgerfang, wait!" She cried, licking Gilapaw's forehead, trying to cool him. Badgerfang turned and ran to his side.

"What happened?" He demanded, half annoyed and half concerned. Gilapaw held up his injured paw and sighed. As Snowtip took the bleeping paw in her own paws, she gave a grunt of dis-content.

"That looks horrid, Gilapaw! What happened to it?" She cried, licking the sand out of the wound. It stung, but Gilapaw just clenched his jaw and pushed through.

"The hot sand split it," he groaned. "The sand got into the cut then and irritated it." Badgerfang looked around and nodded.

"Its dark anyways. Lets set up camp here for the night and rest. Maybe when we wake up we will have clear heads for searching," he concluded, yawning. "I'll lead a patrol to find nest material and a good place for sheltering. Snowtip, you stay with Gilapaw."

*****

Gilapaw woke with a yawn, reaching out his paw to stretch. Snowtip had wrapped his forepaw in soft dead tinder-grass and tied it off with a bendy stick Ryeflight had found in the sand. The sand hadn't gotten back into the wound yet, and it felt much better after Snowtip washed it.

He looked at the rest of the sleeping patrol, he in the middle with Turtleface and Snowtip on either side, Ryeflight sleeping between them in a circle surrounding Gilapaw. Badgerfang slept under a nearby green spiked plant, probably sleeping on guard duty.

Gilapaw looked up at the sky, watching the sun touch fire to the horizon briefly before the sky settled into it's pink wispy state of the sunrise. He smiled. "Here comes the sun." He said to himself quietly, and looked back over his shoulder at the hill they had sheltered behind.

I wonder what I can see from up there? He wondered curiously, and got to his paws. He limped to the top of the hill as the sun crept its way closer to his clanmates, and finally he peered over the edge, and his mouth dropped open wide in astonishment. He ran back down the hill, tripping over his paws.

"Snowtip! Ryeflight! Turtleface, Badgerfang wake up!!!" He cried, shaking them excitedly. "Wake up, wake up!"

Badgerfang growled in annoyance. "Gilapaw, shut up! I'm trying to sleep..." He opened his crooked mouth as far as it allowed in a huge yawn, his teeth glinting in the growing light. Snowtip and Turtleface stretched together, taking turns licking each other's sleep-spiked fur.

"Hurry up, Badgerfang! We have to go! I've found it!" Gilapaw pulled Badgerfang to his paws.

"Found what, exactly?" Reflight yawned, scratching his ears with his foot.

"I've found the Twolegplace!"

*****

"Stay behind me, everyone." Badgerfang insisted in a low meow as they crept towards the Twolegplace. It felt so good to be on wet, cold grass again, and Gilapaw relished the feeling on his hard, calloused pads. He slinked forward, slithering up to Badgerfang.

"I can go first, sneak around and scout for trouble. I'm small," he

offered, shaking his injured paw. He shook the binding off, and jumped with relief as the cold, wet grass kissed his wound.

Badgerfang looked at him like he was crazy. "Gilapaw, how could I let you go first?! I should go, its my responsibility to keep everyone safe, and I will!" He said. Gilapaw stepped in front of him.

"No, Badgerfang, I can slip into small places. I'll sneak around, I'll be careful," he insisted, his eyes hard and serious. Badgerfang shook his head.

"No, Gilapaw, I can't let you!" He said again. Gilapaw finally lost his temper.

"Let me prove to you I'm not some helpless kit! I'm almost 13 moons for StarClan's sake!" He exploded, tail lashing. Gilapaw stared at Badgerfang, challenging him. He had always babied Gilapaw, and never let him explore or do daring things. And Gilapaw was sick of it.

Gilapaw finally calmed down when he saw the look on his clanmates' faces. Staring at his paws, he felt his ears go hot. "Besides, you can stay here and protect everyone else, Badgerfang." He offered more quietly.

Badgerfang was taken aback, his eyes wide as he shook his head with surprise. Then he sighed, staring at the ground.

"Gilapaw, I love you so much and I don't want to lose you. But if you think you are strong and cunning enough and you would like to prove yourself, then so be it. I cannot stop you. Just-" he looked at his adoptive son.

"Be careful and come back to me." He said, and Gilapaw nodded.

"I promise."

Chapter 12

Gilapaw looked back at his patrol before he slipped into the hold they had found in the red stone wall. Squeezing through, he felt his pelt tear ever so slightly as he wriggled his way in. The rough stone scratched his skin. When he finally made it through he looked back to see tiny tufts of brown and orange fur hanging in the crevice. *Ouch.*

Gilapaw shook what was left of his pelt before he looked around to get his bearings. Around him were large, red stones cut in identical shapes. Inside them were tiny, rounded tipped trees that were just as orderly and identical as the boxes they were contained in.

Twolegs are weird.

Gilapaw swung his scruffy head around again to look at the thunderpath in front of him. It was coming straight towards him, and it split into two directly in front of his paws, going in either direction. The hard dirt under his paws was white with different dark pebbles encased inside it, like some sort of glue. *What?*

Suddenly a squeal of a twoleg made Gilapaw jump out of his skin, crouching in the white rock. A twoleg kit clutching his mother's paw was trying to tear itself from her grasp to run to Gilapaw. The mother twoleg looked exasperated, her long, curly red head-fur bouncing in her eyes as her kit shook her arm. Gilapaw took the chance to scramble out of the way, running across the black thunderpath blindly.

A loud rumbling filled his ears and Gilapaw spun around wildly to see a large yellow monster swerving towards him, and he froze, crouching in the middle of the road in fear. He closed his eyes and waited for his death to come, but as heartbeat after heartbeat passed by, nothing happened. He opened his eyes to see the car had driven over him, and he had slipped under the gap between the ground and the monster's intricate belly. Breathing a sigh of relief, he slipped off the road and onto the other side.

He saw right in front of him a large row of houses, all with neatly groomed short grass on their front territories. Some had large barriers made of various thins, some of shiny string woven in a complicated diamond pattern, and some of large multicolored wooden slabs sticking out of the dirt. He passed a blue barrier like this and spent a few heartbeats trying to figure out where the twolegs got such a wood.

Blue trees? I wish I've seen one! He thought in confusion and continued on.

He poked his nose into one of the cracks between the blue slab, looking inside, and quickly flinched away as soon as he saw what was inside. A large black dog with brown flecks was sleeping in a small den made of more colored wood. He backed away slowly, and sighed.

I should get the patrol and give them the all clear. Gilapaw thought and turned tail to retrace his steps. Past the fences, past the thunderpath and across, then to the trimmed trees and to the hole. He squeezed through with much difficulty again and faced his clanmates with wide eyes.

"So?" Badgerfang prompted, his eyebrows raised. He gave his pelt a once-over before he spoke, checking if he was okay. He gave a satisfied smile. "Good job, Gilapaw." He praised proudly.

Gilapaw purred. "Thanks. All clear. Only, don't go in the garden with the blue wood barrier. It has a mean looking dog in it." He warned. Turtleface tipped her head.

"Blue wood? Twolegs are crazy!" She echoed in laughter. *Exactly my thoughts.* Gilapaw silently agreed, smiling to himself. Snowtip giggled too.

One by one they pushed themselves into the hole, until the whole patrol was safely through. Ryeflight's eyes were wide as he took it all in.

"Its just like the stories." He breathed. The rest of the patrol looked around in fascination. Turtleface poked a tree and giggled as it

jostled in its pot, leaping down to explore the rest of the path.

"Twolegs are so weird!" Snowtip commented as she stared at the walls across the thunderpath. "I can see a purple wood barrier!"

Badgerfang stepped forward. "Everyone quiet. Lets just cross the thunderpath and look for kittypets."

Just as he spoke, a friendly meow sounded from behind them. "Kittypets? Whats that?" It asked, its mew light and innocent. Gilapaw still jumped, whipping around. A light cream kittypet with orange spots was staring at them with dazzling blue eyes. "Hi! I'm Sam, whats your name? You lot sure look funny, what is it your housefolk feed you poor things? Y'all look half starved!"

Chapter 13

Ryeflight let out a scoff. "Housefolk?! I'm not a filthy kittyept! I'm a clan cat!" He shot indignantly. Badgerfang shot a glare at him. Ryeflight slapped his tail over his mouth. "Sorry. I just can't handle being called a kittypet."

Sam was watching curiously from his perch on top of the red stone wall. "Kittypet? Clan cat?" He echoed, his eyes clouded with confusion. "What are y'all talking about?"

This time Snowtip answered. "We come from DewClan, the group of wild cats across the desert." She explained. "Kittypets are cats who live with two- housefolk." She corrected herself quickly. Sam nodded.

"Ooohhh. Okey doke! I'm just headn' home, if you wanna join me. I've got plenty of extra food for lone strangers like you. Where y'all goin'?" He asked, leaping down. His bright blue eyes were very kind and sincere.

Ryeflight almost let out a gag behind Gilapaw, and he heard a harsh nudge from Snowtip. Turtleface giggled again. Badgerfang answered. "We are looking for cats to live with is, we recently recovered from a very dark time of many deaths." He said. Gilapaw shuddered, grateful he didn't go more in depth.

Sam's eyes suddenly softened. Their cheerful glint disappeared. "Oh." He said quietly, his tail, a heartbeat ago held high and confident, was now dropped to the ground. Gilapaw moved to touch his paw.

"Whats wrong?" He asked gently. Sam sniffled, lifting his paw to rub his eyes the slightest bit.

"Oh, nothin'. It just..." He didn't finish. A long silence followed, all the cats staring awkwardly around. Turtleface was staring especially awkwardly at her paws, tail twitching with anxiety.

Finally she was the one to break the silence. "It's ok, Sam. You can tell us..." She began, but he shook his head and sniffled, trying to look his bravest. He shook his head harder for a split second, and sighed.

"Nah, I'm fine. I'll take y'all back to my place, we can talk there an' you can all meet my friends! Maybe you'll find whatever your lookin' for with them!" He suggested, and bounded across the black thunderpath without warning, leaving the clan cats to scramble after him. Ryeflight was last in line, hesitating a heartbeat warily as a monster turned the corner and started to hurtle towards him. Ryeflight froze.

"*Ryeflight!!!*" Snowtip called to her mate, skidding to a stop. Sam looked up in alarm, his eyes wide. Snowtip made a move to jump on the thunderpath to shove Ryeflight out of the way, but Sam held her back.

"No, you'll get hurt!" He cried. Ryeflight screeched, running blindly ahead, trying to outrun the monster's roaring engines. But he wasn't fast enough, and the monster hit his grain colored fur with a sickening thump.

Snowtip screeched, and Sam finally released her. The twoleg in the monster clambered out of it's belly, and let out a yowl of alarm, reaching down to gently touch Ryeflight's bloody body. Snowtip pelted to his side and hissed, swiping at the twoleg with open claws. The twoleg gasped and shot up, backing away from Snowtip. When it left, Snowtip grabbed Ryeflight's scruff and pulled him to the rest of the patrol, where she lay next to him, licking his forehead.

"Ryeflight, wake up!" She mewled desperately, her voice horrified. Sam gave a grieved look as he sat down, watching silently and respectfully keeping his distance.

"I'm sorry! I don't know if I can guarantee his safety, Snowtip... But I do know one way he could have a chance at surviving..." Sam said quietly after a minute of her sobbing. Snowtip looked up, her eyes streaming with tears.

"What? Tell me, please!" She begged. Sam looked at the ground.

"You won't like it."

"*Tell* me!"

Finally Sam sighed. "Y'all could take him to the vet... And they could heal him. But I don't know if he'll ever be able to come back to you, y'all might not get him back." He explained. "My housefolk take in injured cats and dogs to the vet, and they 'most never come back. They get adopted at the vet, or sent straight to a shelter." He said. "You might never see him again, but he'll be alive."

Snowtip sobbed quietly into Ryeflight's fur. "My love..." She whispered. Gilapaw hung his head low. Ryeflight was always a kind and easy tom to joke around and play with. He was always a fun guy.

Badgerfang touched Snowtip's shoulder. "He'll be alive and safe, Snowtip. Isn't that better than dying now?" He said gently. When Snowtip nodded painfully, Badgerfang sighed.

"Take us to this vet, Sam. Please." He added. Sam nodded solemnly, and turned tail to race off into the sunhigh sun.

"I'll be right back."

Chapter 14

Gilapaw sat down, listening to Snowtip's sobs as she said goodbye to her mate's broken and bloody body. Badgerfang sighed, burying his nose into his pelt, grieving just as if he were dead.

"Goodbye, old friend. I hope you're new life is happy and comfortable," he whispered sadly, closing his eyes. "StarClan light your path..."

Gilapaw lowered his head solemnly, as did Turtleface. They stayed like this until Sam came running back, his eyes wide. Turtleface jumped up excitedly, a sad smile forced onto her lips. Or was it...? Gilapaw shook his head. *Stop it. Focus.*

"My twoleg is behind me, don't be alarmed." He explained. Just as he spoke, a female twoleg with long, flowing dark brown head-fur came running into view, her eyebrow furrowed with concern. She garbled something to Sam, as if to praise him, and reached out to touch Ryeflight. Snowtip hissed, and Badgerfang quickly held her back, mumbling soothingly to her as the twoleg picked Ryeflight gently up. Turtleface hung her head sadly.

Sam nodded to the group. "Come on, y'all can come too, its alright!" He called and bounded after his twoleg, leaping without hesitation into the belly of a large blue monster.

"Sam! No!" Gilapaw heard Turtleface cry, her eyes wide in terror. "It'll eat you!!"

Sam poked his fuzzy cream head out of a window with a warm, happy smile. "Come on, slowpokes!" His muffled mew laughed. Gilapaw exchanged looks with Badgerfang.

"Should we trust it?" He wondered aloud. Turtleface stepped forward.

"Well, we *are* trusting him with the life of one of our warriors...

Soo...?" She prompted, and without a heartbeat of hesitance, leaped inside after Sam. Badgerfang took a deep breath and followed, helping Snowtip to her paws and pulling her up inside. Gilapaw was the only cat who remained. He summoned up all of his courage and leaped in a heartbeat after the monster turned itself alive with a menacing growl. Gilapaw screamed and crouched in the soft, squishy floor underpaw, unsheathing his claws to pull on the soft fabric, his fur rising. The entrance to the monster's belly slammed shut, and Badgerfang growled.

"It was a trap! You traitor!" He growled, leaping at Sam. Sam's eyes widened and he dodged, and Turtleface held him back.

"Your such a mousebrain!" She cried, scolding him. "It's just a transportation device! Calm down!" She said, obviously annoyed and on the end of her rope. "Just shush!"

Badgerfang gave her a glare, but backed away, staring at Sam. He sat down reluctantly and Sam straightened up. The monster began to jerk forward, and the roar grew louder. Snowtip looked anxiously over the felted wall that served as a backrest for the twoleg in front of them, desperately trying to see Ryeflight.

It seemed only heartbeats until the roaring of the monster stopped, and the walls opened, leaving the clan cats free to jump out whenever they pleased. Badgerfang didn't hesitate, followed quickly by Gilapaw, then Turtleface. Snowtip hung back, waiting for the twoleg to hurry around to the other side of the monster and gently take the injured Ryeflight in her arms, cradling him as if he were a delicate butterfly. It was only then that she jumped down, following the twoleg's every move.

"Follow me," Sam instructed. "My twoleg'll fix him up, y'all can't disturb her while she's working." He explained. "Come on, you lot are such slowpokes!" He trotted in a different direction, heading towards a gap in a long shiny tendril wall, and wriggled through it. "Don't y'all wanna meet my buddies?!"

This seemed to rouse Badgerfang and he ran after Sam, wriggling inside the wall. Turtleface followed suit, then Gilapaw, looking back at Snowtip.

"You coming?" He asked. Snowtip stared at her paws, hesitating. When he saw how much pain she seemed to be in, he stopped, padding over to her. "Whats wrong?" He asked gently.

Snowtip sighed. "I-I think I'll stay here, Sam. I want to wait for Ryeflight." She whispered. Sam nodded and she smiled a smile that seemed to not quite reach her eyes, and trotted half-heartedly after the twoleg. After she was gone, Gilapaw dove through the tendril fence, coming up on the other side.

"Who's next?" He queried, shaking his fluffy head to sort the hair sticking up in spikes all around him. Sam giggled and gave his fur a pat-down before answering.

"I'll take y'all to see my bud, Weasel!" He said cheerfully. "Hes a brown tom that lives in the barn with a few other loners, Mouse and Claw. They aren't too nice to strangers, but once you get to know them they are real knee-slappers!" He said with a grin.

Gilapaw cocked his head. "Knee-slappers?"

Sam spun around, his ears red. "Oops. I forgot y'all aren't from 'round here. It means funny. My twolegs say it all the time." He explained. "Sorry!"

Turtleface laughed. "Its alright!" She giggled. Gilapaw watched the she cat smile warmly at Sam. *She's been friendly...* He thought with a bit of resentment. He missed Wishkit, she was probably already an apprentice by now. Her pretty sparkling tabby pelt and blue eyes occupied his mind and he sighed.

Badgerfang shoved Gilapaw jokingly on the back, jolting him from his thoughts. "Come on, slowpoke!" He smiled and trotted ahead, and Gilapaw hurried to catch up as they headed across the grassy field.

Chapter 15

Gilapaw followed Sam as he bounded excitedly over the grass, and ran up to meet a fluffy brown tom with spiked fur and short, stout legs. "Weasel!" He purred, nuzzling his friend. "Its so nice to see you! Hows the prey?" He greeted Weasel warmly, clearly excited. "Are Claw and Mouse here? I want y'all to meet someone!" He exclaimed. "This is Badgerfang, Turtleface, and Gilapaw! They're clan cats from across the desert, and they need cats to come with them!"

Weasel's cheerful face was replaced by a solemn one. "Oh... Uh, Mouse, she's-" he didn't finish, ignoring the introduction of the clan cats. Sam's eyes widened. He shook his head, and pushed past Weasel with worry, bursting into the barn.

"Mouse?! Mouse!" He cried. Weasel touched his tail to his shoulder.

"Sam, she's gone..." He whispered. "She died giving birth to Claw's kits." He explained, a faraway look in his eyes. "I'm sorry..."

Turtleface bowed her head, and Gilapaw followed her lead, Badgerfang too. Sam's tail drooped. "No... She was such a great friend!" He whispered. His eyes looked back up at his friend. "Is Claw here?" He asked tentatively. Weasel smiled, nodding.

"Yeah. He's inside playing with Moss and Pebble!"

Gilapaw couldn't help but smile. *If we can get these kits to come with, we'd be coming home with a score!* He thought triumphantly, his smile widening. Sam looked at Weasel and ducked inside the barn. Muffled mews of mixed sadness, joy, and excitement came from inside.

Gilapaw dipped his head to Weasel. "Hello! It's nice to meet you, I'm Gilapaw!" He introduced himself. Weasel smiled warmly to him.

"Pleasure! Weasel's the name!" He responded, and Gilapaw smiled.

Weasel flicked his tail towards the entrance to the barn. "You're welcome to come in if you like, I don't bite!" He said to Badgerfang and Turtleface, and Turtleface smiled warmly.

"Thanks, Weasel!" She said cheerfully, flicking her tail across his nose and trotted dreamily inside. Badgerfang gave Gilapaw a look, and raised his eyebrows in question. Gilapaw in turn shrugged, and walked inside after her.

When he lifted his head, Turtleface was sitting with her flank nearly touching Sam, her tail beside his, facing the kits. Sam was smiling and speaking to a jet black tom that Gilapaw could only assume was Claw, both cats speaking with a hushed voice. Gilapaw cleared his throat, and Turtleface jumped, flinching away from Sam. She licked her ruffled chest in embarrassment. Gilapaw smiled, twitching his whiskers in amusement.

When Claw noticed Gilapaw, he immediately leaped over to the kits, stepping over them, hissing and fluffing up his fur. Badgerfang appeared behind Gilapaw, and Claw's back arched. Sam touched his fluffy cream tail to his friend. "Don't be alarmed, Claw! These are my friends, its okay!" He rushed to say. Claw stared at Gilapaw, his amber eyes boring into his fur. Gilapaw squirmed uncomfortably under his hard gaze.

"Why didn't you tell me?!" He growled to Sam. Sam nosed him up gently to reveal two shaking kits clutching underneath their father. One, a brown and black dappled calico she cat, and her larger brother, a stone colored tom. Claw reached down to mutter a soothing word and the two kits relaxed, settling into a seated position beside each other.

Sam stared at his paws. "No time. Anyways, Claw, this is Gilapaw, Badgerfang, and Turtleface. They come from the clans across the desert, and they are looking for cats to come live with them!" He explained quickly. "I thought you might want to know about it, you and Mouse always loved adventure..." He trailed off sadly. Weasel ducked in just as he finished.

"Adventure? Sign me up!" He laughed, his eyes wide and excited. Claw looked a little interested, but his face clouded at the mention

of his deceased mate ever so slightly.

"Would you be interested, Claw?" Sam asked gently. "It could be good for you..." He glanced at the hay bales behind them, two empty nests side by side. Claw closed his eyes, and a tiny teardrop lingered at his eye.

"Sam, I don't know... I have to stay here with Mouse-" he broke off, staring at Moss and Pebble as they tumbled around on the ground.

"I'm gunna get ya!" Moss laughed. Pebble rounded on her, and dodged her leap, spinning around clumsily to land on her tail. "Ow!" She yelped, and swatted at his face. "Meanie! You'll pay for that!" She knocked him over roughly and tickled his belly.

"Ahh! No! Stop it, please!" He begged through giggles, clutching his stomach and trying to push her paws away. "Ahh!"

Gilapaw smiled. Then he turned to Claw. "We'd be very happy to care for you and your kits..." He began. "They are very strong and well built warriors. They would make a very fine addition to our clan." He said politely. Claw smiled, dipping his head.

"Thank you. I will think about your offer, I promise."

Chapter 16

A/N
Guys, im gunna put a star next to the things that might not be clear as to what they are, and i'll put what they are at the end of the chapter.

*****

Sam led the way to the front door of his grey Twoleg den. Flicking his tail, he looked expectantly at Badgerfang and Gilapaw. "Well, aren't y'all gunna go in?!" He prompted. Gilapaw widened his eyes in absolute disbelief.

"*Us?"* He echoed. "You want *us* in *there?"*

Sam rolled his eyes and crouched funnily, his rear end sticking up but his chest touching the ground. Wriggling his tail and laughing, he answered, "You lot sure are funny!" And with that he trotted inside, Turtleface at his heels, following without hesitation. Badgerfang mumbled something about 'kittypets' and 'filth' as he trudged inside, Gilapaw bringing up the rear.

When Gilapaw stepped inside, he fought the urge to curl up his lip with disgust. The reek of twoleg was on *everything.* The floor under his paws was cold and hard, cut into a pattern of squares covering the room. He watched Badgerfang shake each of his paws in turn, still curling his lip and twitching his tail in disgust.

Sam poked his head out from behind a wall. "Come on! I'll show you where I sleep!" He said, bounding up some weird, slanted floor* that was zigzagged, to create ledges to step up on. Gilapaw tipped his head to one side as he placed a paw onto one. *Maybe twolegs aren't a complete waste after all,* He thought with a laugh, running after Sam. He followed him through another door, into a room with a much more pleasant feeling floor, covered in soft fur that squished between his claws. He began to purr, kneading his claws in and out through the fur.

Sam rushed over to him. "No! Don't, it'll ruin the carpet!" He said, pulling Gilapaw's claws out of the soft floor. Gilapaw stared at him in confusion, but said nothing.

He raised his head to look around the rest of the room. It had a large wooden box* with no wall on the front, the Twolegs moved it to sit on top of the box, against the wall. Another peculiar platform* stood in front of it, and Gilapaw leaped up, curious. He stepped onto the box with no front, and immediately arched his back, hissing at the shiny substance in front of him.

There was a brown cat in front of him, with green eyes and a few orange blotches here and there. The cat mirrored him, hissing silently and arching its own back. "There's another cat up here!!" Gilapaw called over his shoulder. He crouched down, ready to charge at the stranger. Tensing his hind legs, he ignored Sam's muffled mews and took a flying leap at the intruder, only to hit his head on the shiny substance, falling back with a throbbing head. The intruder did the same.

Sam helped Gilapaw up. "Gilapaw, it's you! Thats called a mirror, it's like a magic box that shows you what you look like!" Sam breathlessly explained. "See?" Extending a claw to point in the direction of the 'mirror', Gilapaw saw a new intruder identical to Sam doing the same.

"Are you hurt?" Sam asked gently. Gilapaw shook his head to clear it, and stared up at Sam.

"Twolegs are weird."

"I agree." He answered with a laugh and helped Gilapaw down.

Turtleface laughed and sat beside Sam as he clambered down. "It's alright, Gilapaw. I would have done the same thing, its in our instincts!" She said as a matter-of-factly.

Sam cut in. "Its getting late. I'll take y'all to where the guest cats sleep, follow me." Sam padded out of the strange 'carpeted' room with the 'mirror' and the large square rock* in the middle of the room. Gilapaw tipped his head to one side.

"Sam, wait up! I want to look at this!" He bunched his hind legs up, ready to leap. When he landed, he stuck out his tail, alarmed as he didn't stop falling when he hit the top. He sunk into the soft cushy rock up to his belly, unable to move. His hair stuck up all over the place. "Sam! Help!" He cried, panic washing over him. He couldn't move. Sam leaped up in front of him.

"Gilapaw, its alright. Just take a step, you'll be fine. This is where the twolegs sleep, they like the cushy-ness, but it can't hurt you. You'll be fine." He soothed, nosing him forward. Gilapaw took wobbly step after wobbly step, until he could leap down from the scary twoleg nest.

"Why would *anyone* want one of those?! I could barely walk!" Gilapaw shuddered after his paws were safe on solid ground. Sam shrugged.

"Like y'all said... Twolegs are weird." He said with a giggle and trotted to catch up to Turtleface, who was waiting in the doorway. Gilapaw shook his fuzzy pelt, and ran after them.

*****

Slanted zigzagged floor: stairs

Wooden box with no front: a vanity desk

Strange platform in front of vanity: chair or stool

Square rock: bed xD

Chapter 17

Gilapaw woke to a screech in the night. He shot out of his makeshift den of soft pelts, his fur bristling. Badgerfang and Turtleface shot forward, pelting towards the entrance of the den towards the cry. Sam ran after them, fully awake with fear.

They burst outside, and the hazy scent of fire hit Gilapaw like a tital wave. His eyes and lungs burned in the smoke lifting from the barn. His eyes widened. The kits!

Sam seemed to have this realization too, for they both pelted down the path towards the field, running desperately towards the flaming barn. The group behind Gilapaw ran after them, their eyes glittering with determination. This was the warrior code.

No kit shall be neglected no matter their kin.

By the time they reached the barn, the smoke was too thick to see a fox length ahead. Gilapaw kept pushing himself, his lungs burning as he stared at Sam's bushy tail. As they entered the barn, he broke away, coughing over his shoulder. "Meet me back outside! We have to split up if we are gonna find Weasel, Claw *and* the kits!" He cried, and, without waiting for an answer, bolted off to the heart of the blaze.

Sparks flew everywhere. Embers of wood burnt to a crisp fell like acid rain, and Gilapaw dodged them, zigzagging back and fourth to avoid getting singed. His lungs were screaming, and he coughed, staggering slightly. He fell down, his eyes watering and his lungs heaving for clean, fresh air.

He closed his eyes, determination sparking in his heart. *I have to go on. I have to save the kits!* He thought, forcing himself to his paws. He took another wobbly step and soon grew more strength, driven by desperation and determination. He had to go on.

A loud crack above his head broke his thoughts, and he looked up,

shielding his eyes from the smoky haze to see a blazing wooden slab, its connection to the barn weak, breaking into tiny embers of charcoal. Gilapaw let out a yelp as a spark brushed his shoulder, and he dove out of the way as the plank of wood came crashing down, spraying flames everywhere like a splash of water. A sudden yowl of agony split the air.

Gilapaw shook his fur, trying to clear his hazy mind. His breaths were becoming tight, short and ragged, and he knew he had to leave soon. But he had to find the cat who had made the yowl of pain. Heading in the general direction of the yowl, he knew he had to be close.

A tiny moan caught his attention. Gilapaw perked his ears up, and called out in a raspy voice. "Hello? Claw?"

He was answered by a faint whimper of reply, and Gilapaw followed the sound, trotting faster. He rounded a bend to see the plank that had fallen, fallen right on top of a shadowy black figure. "*Claw!!*"

Gilapaw rushed towards the tom, unsheathing his claws. He dug them into the sizzling wood, the flames subsided now that it had fallen. His paw pads screamed as he touched the wood, but he pushed harder, using the pain as new strength. Suddenly a paw nudged him and he stopped. Claw looked up at his with amber eyes, glazed over in pain.

"Save... Moss and Pebble..." He wheezed breathlessly. The two kits were beside their father, huddling together in fear. They looked up at Gilapaw with matching blue eyes. Gilapaw growled, and shook his head.

"No! You'll be fine, let me save you!" He insisted, unsheathing his claws again to push the plank off his friend. Claw growled.

"Go!"

Gilapaw's pads burned as he touched them to the ground, but he ignored it and bent over to lick Claw's forehead. "Claw, I will protect them with my life," he whispered, and he moved closer to

Moss and Pebble, picking the two up by their scruffs. "I promise."

Tail dragging behind him, he carried the two shaking kittens back towards the entrance, his chest tight. When he finally made it into the open air, he collapsed, heaving in the clean air like he would never get a chance to again.

Turtleface stood over him beside a char-furred Sam, who was licking a heaving Weasel worriedly. Badgerfang turned his eyes to Gilapaw. "Where is Claw?" He demanded.

Turtleface gave him a harsh look. "Badgerfang!" She rasped, as if she was in as long as Gilapaw. "He's barely breathing, let the poor apprentice catch his breath!!"

Gilapaw licked to two shaking kits beside him before he shook his head sorrowfully. "Turtleface... He..." Gilapaw was broken off by a fit of coughs. Sam's eyes widened and he hung his head, as if to give up.

The rest of the group nodded in understanding, and Turtleface helped Gilapaw up. "Its alright, Gilapaw. You saved Moss and Pebble, you did wonderfully.

Sam and Weasel shared their mourning. "We will miss him. We all will." They murmured. Gilapaw curled his tail protectively around the two kits. "They are mine to protect. I swore their safety on my life, and that is what I will do." He caught Sam's gaze. "I hope you understand.

Sam nodded sorrowfully. "They are yours to keep, Gilapaw." He said quietly, a tiny smile crossing his lips. "Claw asked you, its only honorable to give him his final wish."

Chapter 18

Badgerfang gazed around at the group. Almost a half moon had passed since the fire. They had lost Snowtip, who wanted to stay near her mate. She had decided to stay as a kittypet with Ryeflight, and Gilapaw and Turtleface had to agree with Badgerfang that they should let her choose. But they had also gained 10 cats, 6 of which were kits.

There was Sam and Weasel, whom both were eager to join. Moss and Pebble never left Gilapaw's side, and the two were growing stronger. The newest members they had found in an alley, half starved and scared. Their names were Scamp and Jenny, both siblings with thick red fur identical to each other. The only way to tell the two twins apart was their eyes, Jenny had dark brown eyes, and Scamp had bright blue. The two were becoming accustomed to the scrap of clan life they had a taste of since they left, and were always willing to lend a helping paw.

They had also stumbled upon a tiny, half starved she cat with a single eye. When the found her, the had asked her name, and she refused to do anything but nod or shake her head. After a coaxing from Gilapaw, they convinced her to lift her tail, revealing four newborn kittens. They offered to take her in, and she had nodded yes. She didn't have a name, so Badgerfang had given her the name Drizzle. She would get a full name if she chose to stay. Even after a few days together, Drizzle refused to speak. She seemed pretty shaken.

That night Turtleface had slept with Sam. The two cats were inseparable, and there was no doubt that they loved each other. Gilapaw slept beside Moss and Pebble, curling his tail around the two tiny kits. He couldn't wait to get home and bring Wishpaw a new family, she would be delighted. She might even be a warrior already!

He opened his eyes as Badgerfang cleared his throat. "Attention, everyone!" He called, his eyes warm. "I think we have enough cats.

Lets head home, everyone." He said briskly. Turtleface and Sam both nodded, their flanks touching. They had been scouting around the twolegplace the past half moon, and it was pretty much time to go. Gilapaw nodded as well, the thought of seeing Wishpaw again made his heart leap with joy.

Scamp's eyes widened with excitement. "Finally! I can't wait, Jenny!" He crowed with joy, jumping around his sister. She purred and tackled him playfully.

Weasel looked up from grooming Moss. "I can't either, you make it all sound so exciting!" He purred. Sam smiled at his friend and nodded, turning his head to Turtleface, who was resting her head on his shoulder.

"Then its settled. We leave now." Badgerfang said, getting to his paws with a yawn. Pebble looked up at Gilapaw with his wide, blue eyes.

"Are we going to our new home, Gilapaw?" He asked. His storm grey pelt was neatly groomed as always. He opened his mouth to say something, and Badgerfang cleared his throat.

"I wasn't done. I think a ceremony is in place before we leave..." He said, his blue gaze resting on Gilapaw. Gilapaw stared back, confused.

"Me?" He asked, his voice wavering. Badgerfang answered with a nod.

"Gilapaw, though we are far from home, I call down on on my warrior ancestors to look down on this noble apprentice, though borne of an evil mastermind, has shown light and wisdom in his actions, and is determined to help his clan. For that, I honor him, and as I bestow his name upon him, I ask that you honor him too. From this day forward, he will be Gilafang."

"Gilafang! Gilafang!" The group cheered, Moss and Pebble the loudest. Gilafang smiled proudly, and held his tail high. The day was truly perfect.

*****

They traveled back across the desert all day, and almost the entire night. Paw pads cracked and raw, they stopped and set up camp near moonhigh, when Drizzle and Sam seemed too exhausted to go on. Gilafang's own paw pads were rubbed raw as well, but he barely felt it. He was eager to get home. *I'll be in my nest tomorrow...* He thought, filled with joy.

They set their nests in a circular fashion, kits and Drizzle in the middle with Badgerfang, Turtleface, Sam, Weasel, Jenny and Scamp surrounding them protectively. Gilafang lay with Moss and Pebble at his chest, sleeping peacefully.

When Gilafang woke, the sun was barely peeking above the horizon. He stretched, and, careful not to wake Moss and Pebble at his belly, picked his way out of the circle. His gaze swept over the group. Turtleface and Sam slept together, intertwined lovingly. Jenny and Scamp slept beside each other as well, but in a different way, as if they were protecting each other. Drizzle slept with her kits, curled defensively around them as if they would leave at any moment. Badgerfang sat under a cactus, staring at the sun as it rose.

Gilafang padded up next to him. He smiled. "Shall we wake the others?" He asked in a hushed tone. Badgerfang gave a curt nod.

"I can't wait another moment to be home." He said, a world of longing and heartache in his mew. He was just as homesick as Gilafang was.

"Then lets go home."

Chapter 19

Moss and Pebble pranced around Gilafang's paws as they reached the top of the last hill. Gilafang's heart filled with joy as the forest, his home, came into view. Moss and Pebble stopped for a moment and then began nearly leaping on top of Gilafang for a better look.

"Is that it?! Is it? Wow! Its so big!" They chanted, staring in awe at the trees. "Ive never seen trees that big before!"

Gilafang smiled and hooked a claw gently on Moss's scruff, lifting her down. "Yes. That is your new home, Moss." He mewed gently. Pebble gave a crow of delight, and began prancing around again.

Jenny and Scamp came up behind Gilafang. "Wow. It's beautiful." Jenny breathed to her brother, blinking her sapphire blue eyes. Scamp nodded, unable to say anything.

Sam and weasel came next, Turtleface close behind, and Sam smiled. "I can't wait to meet your sister," he said, nuzzling Turtleface. Weasel purred, kneading the sand.

"I bet you have lots o' adventures in that there forest!" He yowled with glee. Drizzle just stared ahead, silently taking it all in with her single blue eye. Her kits were on her back, tired from the long journey.

Finally, Badgerfang brought up the rear, making sure no one was left behind. He sighed contentedly.

"Home."

*****

Cheers erupted from the camp as Gilafang pushed through the entrance. The clan met him with happy, hopeful faces, hugging him and marveling at Moss and Pebble, who immediately shrunk back behind Gilafang's paws, unsure of all the attention. Lemurstar

leaped up to the highrock, a happy smile plastered on her face.

"Cats of DewClan! I would like to take a moment to welcome our newcomers, we are glad to have you and we hope you will be comfortable in our home. Tonight, we feast bot only in their honor, but to honor our own Clan as well. DewClan lives on for many moons to come!" She ended with a joyful yowl to the sky, and the Clan did the same. Moss and Pebble quickly caught on, yowling to they sky as well, while the cats behind him watched shyly.

Suddenly a white and silver pelt caught his eye.

"Gilapaw?" A mew cracked with emotion sounded, but Gilafang could't make out exactly who it was. His eyes were too blurry with tears. He knew that voice.

"Wishkit?" He breathed. Wishkit ran to him, nuzzling his flanks.

"I've missed you so much! I'm called Wishpaw now, I was apprenticed the day after you left! Oh Gilapaw, I can't believe it's you!" Wishpaw had tears of joy in her eyes.

Gilafang licked her nose. "I'm a warrior, Wishpaw. And I've brought you a family..." He looked at Moss and Pebble. "They have no mother, I was hoping you could be their mother..." He purred. "I'm Gilafang now."

*****

Gilafnag slept in the nursery with Wishpaw that night, after she had accepted his request to care for Mosskit and Pebblekit, whom took on proper Clan names that night. Jenny slept in the apprentices den as Timberpaw, and her brother beside her as Viperpaw. The two had picked their names that night, and, being only ten moons, they would begin training as an apprentice.

Sam and Weasel were taken to the warriors den, where Sam became Creamspots, and Weasel, Weaselfoot. Turtleface had cheered the loudest for Creamspots, and the two had retired to the nursery immediately after, Turtleface announcing she was expecting Creamspot's kits. Gilafang had suspected for awhile, but she had

waited to announce until after they got home. The two lovebirds were happy together, sleeping with their tails curled up beside each other.

Gilafang gave a satisfied purr, and fell asleep, thinking of how much he loved Wishpaw. *I bet thats what Turtleface feels.* He though sleepily. He licked Wishpaw's head gently, and purred himself to sleep.

Gilafang woke up to Mosskit and Pebblekit jabbing him in the side. "Daddy! Daddy can we play with Snowdrop and Dew! Pleaaassseeee?!" Gilafang purred sleepily and nodded.

"Sure, Mosskit. Go play." He confirmed happily, his whiskers twitching with amusement. Mosskit squealed with glee and ran over to Drizzle, who reluctantly let the two play with her kits.

Wishpaw woke beside him, and opened her mouth in a sleepy yawn. She purred, leaning her head on Gilafang's. "I can't wait to be a warrior..." She whispered to him. Gilafang nodded.

"Me too."

But something was troubling him. He felt a tap on the shoulder, and he spun around, but no one was there.

"Hello?" He called. Suddenly, Wishpaw fell away, and Gilafang found himself in an unfamiliar forest. He felt the sticky ground beneath his paws squelch, the much and mud reeking of blood and death. Long, spindly fingered trees seemed to reach out, as if to grab him. He shuddered. "H-Hello? W-Who's there?!"

A shadow moved. Its paws were just visible in the shadows, a familiar honey color. Gilafang's skin crawled.

No. Not now. I'm finally over you, d-don't come back now!

The figure smiled, as if sensing his fear, relishing it, pleasured by his discomfort, and stepped out of the shadows. Her blue eyes shone with hatred, hungry for revenge and eager for death. She spoke in a grated mew that made Gilafang's skin crawl.

"Hello, *son.*"

Chapter 20

Morningstar flicked her tail, and two unfamiliar cats moved, quick as a flash to restrain Gilafang. He growled, struggling in their grasp, but they merely shoved his muzzle to the dirt, trapping him. Gilafang spit out a mouthful of bloody earth and glared at his dead mother.

"What do you want, *mother?!"* He growled, eyes hard and menacing. Morningstar's eyes were soft and gentle, cunningly disguised. She practically oozed honey out of her lips when she answered.

"I only want help with my revenge on Lemurstar, thats all..." She cooed, unsheathing a claw to let it dance on Gilafang's lips. It drew down his cheek lightly, the point driving harshly into his flesh, but not hard enough to hurt. He stared defiantly up at her, undaunted by her subtle threat.

"Coward! And I suppose you want me to do your dirty work?! *Never in a thousand moons!"* He spat, struggling under his restraints. Morningstar grabbed his face with her claws roughly, and thrust her muzzle into his.

"Tsk tsk," she said in a growl. "Maybe not now. But what if I told you a little secret?" She asked, her voice dangerously quiet. Gilafang stared silently into her insane blue orbs. Morningstar reached towards his ears, nicked from his first fight. Her whiskers brushed his and she breathed harshly on his ears, the sound reverberating a million times over inside his eardrums.

"I have your precious *love*," she whispered in a honey sweet tone. "And if you don't do exactly as I say, I'll kill her a million times over."

Gilafang's eyes widened with horror, and Morningstar stared smugly at a silver figure that was appearing through the thick, red fog. She was held by vines, and her eyes were stained with tears. "Wishpaw!" Gilafang cried, pulling desperately against his restraints.

Morningstar cackled, and pushed Wishpaw back into the dirt.

"Now see if you can resist my *horrid* request!" She yowled, standing protectively over a sobbing Wishpaw. "So much as put a claw out of place and she dies!"

Gilafang was released, and, too weak with grief to stand, he stared at the ground, defeated. Wishpaw yowled.

"Don't! Please, don't, Gilafang! Let me die!" She begged, but her cries seemed muffled and distant. Gilafang felt tears well in his eyes. When he finally spoke, his voice came out in a dejected croak, as if he had given up.

"What do I do?"

*****

Lemurstar shook Gilafang awake. Her eyes were wild. "Gilafang! Wishpaw is asleep, but I can't wake her!!! She's trapped, and she seems like she's being tortured! Please, please help her!!" She sobbed, her eyes frantic. Gilafang shot up out of his nest. *Morningstar can control her sleep! She can be killed!!!*

He ran outside, to where Wishpaw's nest had been moved. It was in the clearing, Turtleface and Creamspots standing worriedly over Wishpaw, who was twitching and whimpering in her nightmare like sleep. It twisted Gilafang's heart into pieces, and he felt his chest pound with agony.

"Can't you do something?!" He demanded with a growl to Sunsetpool, leaping at her with fuming anger. He pinned his sister, and snarled in her face. "*SAVE HER!!!!"*

Sunsetpool closed her eyes, her expression sad as she shook her head. "Gilafang, brother, I've tried everything. Even the herbs for a coma. It's like StarClan has captured her. I know when I get visions, I twitch like this, but this is more violent than I've ever seen!" She whispered sadly. Gilafang lifted a paw, and stared grudgingly at her.

"*Lies!!! You ALL lie!!!"* He screamed. Lemurstar moved to restrain

him, but he pushed her down. "*YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING!!!!*"

Lemurstar stared at Gilafang as he kicked a bunch of pebbles, sending them flying overhead. "Gilafang, what has come over you?! Calm down!" She cried, trying to get close enough to him without being squashed.

Gilafang whipped around, staring her in the face. "Don't tell me to be calm when the love of my life is being tortured in her sleep!" He growled, and stomped angrily to the nursery.

*****

Gilafang sat in his cold, dark nest, calmer now that Sunsetpool had given both of them a poppy. Wishpaw lay sleeping, whimpering in her nightmare beside him, not much better, but the poppy had seemed to help the worst of the twitches. No matter what he did, Gilafang just couln't wake her. Mosskit and Pebblekit watched her fearfully.

"Gilafang? Why won't she wake up? She's scaring me!" Mosskit whimpered, licking her frantically. Gilafang held her close.

"My dear, she's having a nightmare. She's trapped, and I am the only one who can save her...." He whispered, his eyes closed, and his paws weighted with weariness.

Mosskit snuggled up beside Gilafang, looking up at him. "Then help her! Please, I can't stand it!" She sobbed, burying her face in his fur. Gilafang put his head in his paws.

"I can't either, love. Trust me."

Guys, i think i'm going to branch off to another book with this! This time, It'll be from multiple pov's, and I hope you enjoy! But, this is the end of book four! Luv you all, I might add an epilogue later.

Next book:

Hey! I forgot to mention the next book is up and its called Morningstar's revenge. XD sorry